



CHAYAT HASHAVUA: LOUSE

CAN ANYONE TEACH US THE HEBREW WORD FOR OUR LEAST FAVORITE ANIMAL?

- If it's one louse, it's one *kinah* (כנה).
- If it's two lice, it's two *kinnim* (כנים).

DOES ANYONE KNOW WHY PASSOVER IS A PARTICULARLY GOOD TIME TO BE TALKING ABOUT LICE?

- At that point in our Torah we're reading about the plague of lice that God brought on Pharaoh because he wouldn't let our people go.
- Imagine that all the dust in the air—what you sometimes can see in a shaft of sunlight in your house—is changed into lice.
- Our Sages taught that the lice pierced the flesh of the Egyptians like darts.
- When the Egyptians put on fresh clothes, they were already infested with lice.

UNLIKE THE FIRST TWO PLAGUES OF BLOOD AND FROGS, PHARAOH'S MAGICIANS WERE NOT ABLE TO IMITATE THE PLAGUE OF LICE. (Exodus 8:15)

- So they declared that the plague was “the finger of God.”
- The Bible also says that the Ten Commandments were written on the stone tablets, the *luchot*, by “the finger of God.”
- And that the heavens, what we see in the night sky, were also created by the “finger of God.” (Psalm 8:4)
- What do you think it means that all these things—the heavens, the tablets of the commandments, and the plague of lice—were created by “the finger of God.”

WHY IS IT EXACTLY THAT WE DON'T LIKE LICE?

- They are blood-suckers, literally.
- They carry diseases such as typhus.
- They cause horrible itching!
- As Rabbah—one of our great teachers who lived more than 1500 years ago—said, “If a louse bit me, I could not study!”
- Why do you imagine that God created lice?

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT LICE IF THEY GET ON US OR IN OUR CLOTHES?

- Tell our parents!
- Take a bath every day.
- Every day put on clean clothes that have been freshly washed in hot water.
- Wash our bed linen regularly.
- Ask our doctor to recommend medications to use on our head and body.

IT'S TIME FOR THE LICE QUIZ!

- Is a louse a mammal, a reptile, or an insect? (It's a small, wingless insect.)
- What do lice feed on? (Blood!)
- What other animals are infected by lice? (Domestic animals include the hogs, the horses, cattle, and dogs.)
- Can lice live under water? (Not the kind that we've been talking about. But there are Fish Lice, which are crustaceans that live on the gills or skin or that burrow into the flesh of fish, and cause the fish to die.)
- Can people be bothered by these underwater lice? (Yes—the most common forms of injury are stings from jellyfish or jellyfish larvae, called sea lice.)

THERE IS A PROVERB—A VERY OLD, WISE TEACHING—ABOUT LICE THAT SAYS:

- “He who killed lice on the Sabbath is as though he killed a camel.” (Shabbat 107b)
- What do you think that means?



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